

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

In the following amendments to the specification, blank lines are not counted.

Please insert the following heading as a new paragraph after the heading and before the first paragraph starting at page 1, line 2:

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Please insert the following heading as a new paragraph before the paragraph starting at page 1, line 20:

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Please insert the following heading as a new paragraph before the paragraph starting at page 4, line 16:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Please insert the following heading as a new paragraph before the paragraph starting at page 4, line 22:

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Please replace the five paragraphs beginning at page 5, line 5 with the following rewritten paragraphs:

Behind the conveyor belts 20, 22, the tube 18 enters a tear-

off head 24, which is also formed by ~~the~~ upper and lower conveyor belts 26, 28. The transporting speed of the tear-off head 24 is at least temporarily greater ~~at least on a phase level~~ than the transporting speed of the conveyor belts 20, 22, so that a tensile stress is produced in the tube 18. When the aforementioned perforation site reaches the space between the downstream end of the conveyor belts 20, 22 and the upstream end of the tear-off head 24, this tensile stress causes the tube section 30 to be torn from the endless tube 18.

At this instant, the leading edge of the tube section 30 has already entered the inlet section 32 of the transporting facility 12. The inlet section is formed by several parallel upper and lower conveyor belts 34, 36, the transporting speed of which is identical with that of the tear-off head 24. The vertical distance between the upper conveyor belts 34 and the lower conveyor ~~belt~~ belts 36 gradually decreases in the transporting direction, so that it becomes possible to introduce the leading edge of the tube section 30 reliably. A clamping roller 38 directs the lower half of the upper conveyor belts 34 somewhat in the downward direction, so that the leading edge of the tube section 30 is clamped at the instant, at which the trailing edge of the endless tube is torn off. The clamping roller 38 can be adjusted to adapt to the length of the tube section 30.

The transporting path, formed by the inlet section 32, is inclined slightly upwards, so that the tube sections, during the further transport, reach a certain height above the stacking station 10. In the region above the stacking station, the upper transport 14 is formed by several parallel conveyor belts 40 ~~44~~, which extend in the horizontal direction and share a turn-around roller 42 with the conveyor belts 34. The lower transport 16 is formed here by two conveyor belts 44, which run over two turn-around rollers 46 and, as can be seen more clearly in Figure 2, lie outside of the lateral edges of the tube section 30. The conveyor belts 44 are connected by cross members 48, 50 only at two places and are synchronized by positive driving mechanisms, such as cogged belts. The cross members 48, 50 are disposed at the conveyor belts 44 in diametrically opposite positions, so that they have equal spacing to one another on both paths along the conveyor belts 44 and consequently reach the turn-around ~~roller~~ rollers at the same time. In the state, shown in Figure 1, the leading edge of a tube section 30 is clamped by the conveyor belts 40 of the upper transport and held by the cross member 48. The trailing, rear end of this tube section 30 rests on the other cross member 50, which returns on the lower half of the conveyor belts 44 to the upstream turn-around roller 46. In this way, the tube section 20 is kept away from an already formed stack 52 of tube sections, which rests in the stacking station 10

on a stacking table 54, which is constructed as a conveyor.

In Figure 2, the stacking device is shown in plan view. To improve the clarity, only the upper conveyor belts 20, ~~36~~ 26 and 34 with their respective turn-around rollers are shown on the supplying side. In the downstream region, however, the conveyor belts 44 of the lower transport are also drawn. It can be seen that the distance between these conveyor belts 44 is greater than the width of the tube section 30 supplied, so that the tube section, when released, falls between these conveyor belts 44 and can reach the stack 52. The depositing of the tube section 30 on the stack 52 is supported by leaf springs 56, which extend in the longitudinal direction between the conveyor belts 40 of the upper transport and are fastened at a stationary support 58, so that, with their free ends, they press on the tube section 30 in the region of the leading edge.

Figure 3 shows the stacking device in a state, which chronologically is a little later than the state shown in Figure 1. The upper cross member 48 has just passed the downstream end of the upper transport 14 here, so that the tube section 30, assisted ~~supported~~ by the action of the leaf springs 56, falls on the stack 52. The tube section still has a certain velocity component in the direction of motion, which, however, in the case of the preferred transporting speed of the transporting facility 12, is only slight (preferably less than 60 meters per minute),

so that the tube section comes to rest in position on the stack 52. If necessary the alignment on the stack is supported by a stop 60, which is mounted securely on the stacking table 54.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 7, line 19 with the following rewritten paragraph:

For the stacking device described, the length of the tube section 30 can be varied within certain limits, since the distance between the cross member 48 and 50 must agree with the distances between the leading edges of consecutive tube sections and not with the precise length of the tube sections.

Accordingly, a shorter length of the tube sections can be ~~compensate~~ compensated for by appropriately larger spacings.